



Stephen King has sold over 60 million books worldwide. He might have received only \$35 for his first story, but his latest four-book deal with Viking and New American Library is a record \$38 million.

Recently he became the first writer ever to have five book simultaneously on the best-seller lists. Despite the genre of most of his novels - horror - he is currently the most popular author in the world.

King of terror

For all his success in the printed word, Stephen King's novels have never translated well into film. Until *Pet Sematary* hit the screens last year, none of his films had really made it big at the box office (except perhaps *Stand By Me*, which owed its success to the removal of King's name from the credits) and plenty had failed (*Maximum Overdrive*, *Cat's Eye* and *Silver Bullet* to mention a few).

Although his books range in subjects from vampires to sewer bound giant spiders, King's films have one major thing in common: they have consistently disappointed fans and critics. The reason seems to be the difficulty in translating King's wildly imaginative prose to a visual image - a process that more often than not turns the terrifying scene on the page to one of innate silliness onscreen.

"Things that are impossible to do cinematically Stephen King does with effortless grace on the page," director John Carpenter (who brought *Christine* to life in 1983) once commented. "After a while, the movies really pale next to the original work of the author."

Rob Reiner, who directed the 1986 movie *Stand By Me*, based on the King novella *The Body*, has stated about King's many movies "To be totally honest, I haven't really liked any of them." There is certainly plenty of them to watch. Twenty-one of King's books or stories have now been translated into film.

At the cinemas, you can now see King's latest and perhaps most successful movie to date: *Misery*, a film that has made over \$56 million at the box office in America and garnered an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress for the film's star Kathy Bates. Another King story recently filmed, *Graveyard Shift* received universal criticism and left cinemas in the US soon after it appeared. These days, King maintains a degree of detached distance from the film versions of his novels and stories.

"I've become progressively less interested in the movies of my books as the years go by," he said. "Like *Graveyard Shift*, I let it go. In that case, it's an exploitation film. That's OK. That movie belongs on the video shelf." Another film adaptation to be released recently is the celluloid version of the best-seller, *It*. This film makes the record for the longest King film, running for an incredible 169 minutes - a time span needed to turn the 1,138 page novel into a believable movie. To try and fit all the many layers of the book into a two hour movie would be like, as famed director George Romero stated, "moving out of a big house and fitting all your things into a studio apartment."

King describes the story as "my final exam as far as supernatural horror went, like my master's thesis on everything I'd done, vampires and werewolves, now let's do it all at once, and call it by that quintessential movie-poster word 'IT'." In this case *It* lives under the streets of a small town in Maine, USA. It knows everybody's deepest fears. It



waits and every 30 years or so, It feeds. The horror is so unspeakable, the would-be heroes of the story can only refer to it as IT.

King fans expecting three hours plus of blood soaked gore are going to be disappointed - Wallace didn't feel it was necessary. "I didn't find the book a gory book at all. He [King] didn't dwell on body parts. To me, what he dwelt on were horrifying, fascinating bits of surrealism that were incredible.

People who don't know very much about horror - and that word has really kind

of lost its meaning - people who don't follow it very closely, think they know what Stephen King is all about. To them I just say, 'Read! Read and learn for yourself that it's about a lot more!'

He's obviously a writer who is fascinated with fear and the dark side of human nature. So was Edgar Allen Poe. King is very emotional, and so much of what he's up to is really wonderful stuff from the heart that really touches me."

- Lyn Jones



For Stephen King fans this is *IT*, the ultimate prize. A collection of 15 of King's best paperback novels is up for grabs in this fantastic competition - plus a copy of the video *IT*. There are also four runner-up prizes of a copy of the video. To win, the experience is certainly less horrifying than reading one of his novels, or watching *IT*. Simply ring the number below

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21 cents per 22 seconds max. Direct all enquires to TeleGraph Communications (03) 890 5160. If you are not connected to 0055, send a postal entry by writing your name and address on the back of an envelope and address it to It Competition, care of the address listed in the front of this magazine.